Soldiers find more victims

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By LEW WHEATON

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP) — Unsuspecting American soldiers clearing away Jonestown's field of death uncovered "more and more and more" bodies Friday. The grim arithmetic showed that at least 775 men, women and children — twice as many as first thought — died in the mass suicide-murder, U.S. officials reported.

Many of the newly discovered bodies were those of children hidden beneath corpses of their parents, U.S. Embassy officials said, and the toll might continue to rise as new victims are found.

The discovery was the tragic solution to a puzzle that had baffled investigators since the ritualistic deaths first came to light last Sunday, when about 400 bodies were reported found. It was thought then that hundreds of residents of the Peoples Temple camp must have fled into the surrounding jungle rather than take poison with the rest of the Rev. Jim Jones' fanatical followers.

A Guyanese government leader said Friday that, based on the death toll of 775, about 100 sect members remain unaccounted for.

A U.S. Embassy source explained that it was not until Friday morning, after three days of working at the camp, that military search teams realized bodies in one area were stacked in "several layers."

The soldiers began clearing out what they thought would be the final group of bodies, said Air Force Capt. John Moscatelli. "We got into an area on a different side of the temple and found more and more bodies ... and we found more and more and more." The "temple" apparently refers to the camp's central pavilion.

Moscatelli said smaller adults also lay under the bodies of larger adults, and he said as far as can be determined the newly found victims, like those counted earlier, died by swallowing poison doled out by Jones' medical team.

The embassy source, who asked not to be identified, said the original count was made by Guyanese authorities and the American troops did not make their own estimate once they arrived.

The source said no bodies were found outside the camp's main clearing. Moscatelli said there were "no indications" of any additional survivors in the

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nearby jungle. About 30 cultists who fled during the communal self-destruction ceremony have since emerged from the wilderness.

Moscatelli said that as of 1 p.m. local time Friday, 485 bodies had been flown by helicopter the 150 miles from Jonestown southeast to the Georgetown airport, 20 were in body bags at Jonestown, 270 others were counted at the camp and "more may be expected to be found."

The bodies were being loaded onto Air Force transports and flown to Dover Air Force Base, Del.

One ex-member of the cult, Debbie Layton, said she had told the State Department last summer that Jones forced followers to practice a weekly suicide drill using a non-toxic fruit drink as "poison."